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1ST DISTRICT, NEW YORK

COMMITTEE ON THE BUDGET

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND LABOR

COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION
AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3201

June 24, 2010

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The Honorable J. Randolph Babbitt
Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave., SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Babbitt,

I am writing today to provide you with official comments regarding the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) on the New York North Shore Helicopter Route (Docket No. FAA-2010-0302; Notice No. 10-08; RIN 2120-AJ75). I applaud your efforts to address helicopter noise over Long Island communities and I look forward to continuing to discuss how we may effectively address this problem. The rule being proposed by your agency is a first step towards providing my constituents with relief from the undue burden of helicopter noise.

For several years, frequent helicopter traffic above Long Island communities has diminished the quality of life for residents in these areas. In my congressional district, excessive noise caused by helicopters regularly traversing the skies above residential neighborhoods is a source of constant frustration for many of my constituents and among the most common complaints I hear from individuals and families. To address this issue, I have worked with my colleagues in Congress to open a dialogue between the FAA, helicopter operators, and the public on various ways to address this continuing problem, as well as collect relevant data from regional airports, homeowners and industry representatives.

As you may recall, the FAA initiated a regulatory solution in response to similar complaints about the same problem more than two decades ago. However, the rulemaking process was discontinued when helicopter carriers addressed noise pollution by initiating voluntary efforts, which proved ineffective. In recent years, the FAA has discounted its ability to regulate helicopter traffic, limiting the effectiveness of proposals to deal effectively with the issue. However, the FAA and industry representatives did take steps to assist in the development of new voluntary effort – a North Shore helicopter route – that sought to direct helicopter traffic along Long Island's northern shoreline between fixed waypoint VPLYD and Orient Point and is the basis for the current proposed rule.

While hardly the remedy frustrated residents demanded, the volunteer route was a significant step towards a potential solution. Unfortunately, since the route was first implemented, it was clear that more was needed to mitigate helicopter noise over Long Island in order to ensure that individual communities were not unduly burdened by the repeated usage of specific transit points over the North Shore.

That is why on December 9, 2009, Senator Schumer and I met with you to discuss FAA's authority to regulate helicopter traffic, and asked for your assistance in implementing more concrete restrictions on the North Shore route and related transit points. As a result of these discussions and your agency's commitment to addressing unnecessary and overly burdensome noise pollution, this proposed rule takes another step towards a reasonable balance between efficient aerial transportation and a better quality of life for those on the ground.

It is with this goal in mind that I have included comments and recommendations from the East End Helicopter Noise Stakeholders Group for inclusion in the proposed rulemaking process (Attached). It is my hope that your agency will give their recommendations every consideration and include them in the final rule to the greatest extent practicable.

Again, I would like to commend your efforts to address the longstanding issue of disruptive helicopter noise over Long Island. I look forward to working with you throughout the rulemaking process to ensure that the voices of my constituents are heard and I stand ready to assist you in any way I can. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the included recommendations please feel free to contact Mark Copeland in my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 225-3826.

Sincerely,



Tim Bishop
Member of Congress



OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISOR

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June 24, 2010

Federal Aviation Administration
Docket Operations M-30
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE.,
Room W12-140
West Building Ground Floor
Washington, DC 20590-0001

Dear J. Randolph Babbitt,

This letter is to express the support of the East End Supervisors listed below for the final recommendations of the East End Helicopter Noise Stakeholders Group numbered 1 through 9 attached to this letter. Docket 2010-0302.

Helicopter flight noise has been an ongoing issue for the East End towns and villages. The efforts of Senator Schumer and the Stakeholders committee have our full support.

Sincerely,

William Wilkinson
Supervisor
Town of East Hampton

James Dougherty
Supervisor
Town of Shelter Island

Anna Throne-Holst
Supervisor
Town of Southampton

Scott Russell
Supervisor
Town of Southold

**06-21-2010 Revised Final Recommendations of
East End Helicopter Noise Stakeholders Group
in response to FAA proposal FAA Docket 2010-0302**

Recommendations:

The following recommendations shall apply to helicopter traffic to and from East Hampton Airport (HTO), Gabreski Airport (FOK), Southampton Village Heliport (87N) and Montauk Airport (MTP), collectively the East End Airports.

1. There should be two FAA mandatory designated routes for helicopter traffic to and from the East End Airports: a 'South Shore Route' and a 'North Shore Route'. This is essential in order to accommodate the important southerly transition routes from HTO and the other East End Airports and to equitably distribute the volume of helicopter traffic using the North and South Shore routes.
2. The FAA should establish procedures in coordination with East End Airports to monitor and enforce compliance with the proposed routes.
3. When departing from either of the two Shore Routes transiting to/from any East End Airport or traversing the area between the two Routes, a minimum altitude of 3000 ft. for any helicopter must be achieved as quickly as possible and maintained until within the approach area of the destination airport.
4. The South Shore Route requires a 'helicopter only flight layer' at JFK between 500-800 ft and above the current VFR corridor to encourage a fair portion of traffic to take this Route. This layer would be similar to the current SFRA Hudson River Rules.
5. The North Shore Route to HTO and MTP should only permit transit to the east of Plum Gut, then over water to the maximum extent possible, directly to and from HTO and MTP.
6. Both North Shore and South Shore Routes should require helicopters to fly not less than one mile from the shore.
7. All helicopter traffic using East End Airports must follow protocols and noise abatement procedures as established for each airport to manage helicopter traffic.
8. HTO and FOK airports should be empowered either directly or via the FAA to manage flight concentrations and nighttime/early morning flights.
9. The foregoing provisions are inter-independent and inseparable and are supported only if adopted in their entirety.

June 21, 2010
KC/DMK